

New feral hog publication strives to set the record straight on accurate numbers

Figures show feral hog harvest numbers lag behind population growth

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COLLEGE STATION – Hardly a day goes by that the feral hog invasion doesn't draw media mention, but the math associated with many of the reports has been mostly speculative – until now, said a Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service expert.

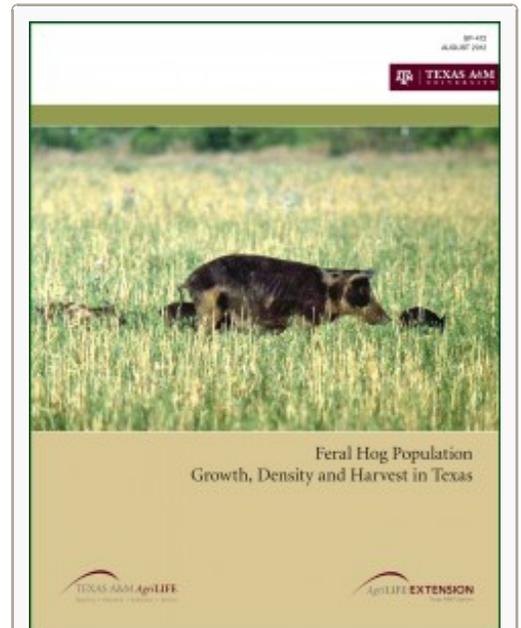
Jared Timmons, AgriLife Extension Plum Creek Watershed Feral Hog Education Program assistant in San Marcos, said the new publication *Feral Hog Population Growth, Density and Harvest in Texas* (SP-472), has solid numbers backed by research to substantiate many of the claims made by those following the feral hog invasion. The publication available for \$1 per copy joins more than a dozen other feral hog-related publications available at <http://agrillifebookstore.org>.

“It’s pretty well accepted that feral hogs cause at least \$52 million in agricultural losses each year in Texas,”

Timmons said. “But what’s poorly understood are the pests’ population dynamics; their survival, reproduction and density for example. The work represented in this publication literally puts facts to figures when it comes to this invasive species that exhibits the highest reproductive capability of any hoofed animal. That trait alone makes population reduction difficult.”

The publication reports the number of feral hogs in the state as between 1 million and 4 million. These estimates are not based on scientific fact, though increased reports of damage suggest the statewide population is growing and expanding in range.

By examining a number of scientific studies throughout the southeastern U.S. and Texas, the publication authors were able to create a statewide mathematical model of feral hog populations



A new publication, “Feral Hog Population Growth, Density and Harvest in Texas (SP-472)” puts facts behind figures. (Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service photo)

using sex, age and reproductive characteristics.

“The population model estimated an 18-21 percent annual population growth with the current average statewide population being 2.6 million head,” Timmons said. “Using these improved population figures, agencies and landowners can better understand the scope of the feral hog problem in Texas.

“Bottom-line, it’s not good. In order to hold our feral hog population at its current level, the annual harvest rate needs to be at least 66 percent for the next five years or more. This alone should be a major cause for concern since the estimated annual harvest is currently only 29 percent.”

Joining Timmons as coauthors for the publication were: Drs. Billy Higginbotham and Jim Cathey, AgriLife Extension specialists at Overton and College Station respectively; Dr. Roel Lopez, Janell Mellish and Jonathan Griffin with Texas A&M University’s department of wildlife and fisheries sciences; Dr. Aaron Sumrall, AgriLife Extension agent in Newton County; and Kevin Skow, GIS specialist with Texas A&M Institute of Renewable and Natural Resources and the Texas Water Resources Institute in College Station.

Support for the Plum Creek Watershed Feral Hog program is provided through Clean Water Act §319(h) Nonpoint Source funding from the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

For more information regarding feral hog management efforts in the Plum Creek watershed, visit <http://plumcreek.tamu.edu/feralhogs/> or contact Timmons at 254-485-4886, jbtimmons@ag.tamu.edu .